

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS IN SEPTEMBER 2003

DRAKE FOUNTAIN

92ND STREET AT SOUTH CHICAGO AND EXCHANGE AVENUES

BUILT: 1892
1906 (MOVED) AND 1909 (MOVED TO PRESENT LOCATION)
SCULPTOR: RICHARD HENRY PARK

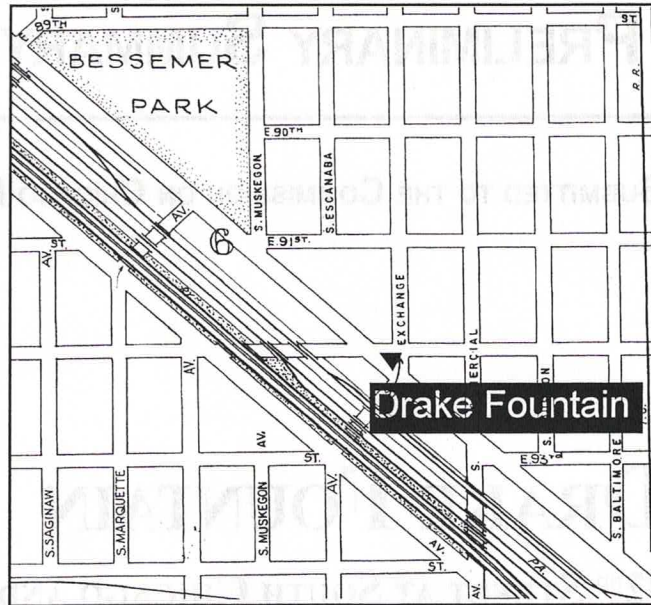
The Drake Fountain (also known as the Columbus Monument), located in the South Chicago community area, is a rare-surviving example of a Victorian-era public drinking fountain. The fountain, a gift from Chicago hotel owner John B. Drake, originally stood on Washington Street in a plaza created by a light court of the old City Hall-County building (located on the same site as the present building). Known as an “ice water fountain,” it dispensed cool drinking water from its four granite basins to office workers passing by. It is distinguished by its Victorian Gothic design and features curving buttresses that rise to a Gothic spire, in front of which is a bronze statue of a young Christopher Columbus. Believed to be Chicago’s first statue commemorating Columbus, the monument was dedicated in December 1892 to mark the 400th anniversary of his voyage. The fountain was subsequently moved around the corner to LaSalle St. in 1906 where it stood until it was relocated to its present site in 1909.

FOUNTAIN HISTORY

The ornate Drake Fountain originally stood on Washington Street in front of the old City Hall-County building and was donated to the City of Chicago in 1892 by prominent Chicago businessman **John Burroughs Drake (1826-1895)**. A legend in the hotel business, Drake provided Chicago with some of its earliest elegant inns including the Tremont House and the Grand Pacific Hotel. The Grand Pacific Hotel, which was located near Clark and Van Buren streets, was one of the city’s most notable social and political

Right: In 1909, the Drake Fountain was moved to its present-day location at the intersection of 92nd St., South Chicago Ave. and Exchange Ave. in the South Chicago community.

Below: The Drake Fountain is a rare surviving example of a Victorian-era public drinking fountain known as an "ice water fountain."



gathering spots, earning the title of the “Republican Headquarters of the West.” Drake played an active role in Chicago commerce, serving as a director of the Chicago & Alton Railroad, a founder of the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, and a director of the Chicago Telephone Company and the Edison Electric Company. Drake’s sons, Tracy and John Drake, Jr., continued the tradition of establishing luxury hotels in Chicago by opening such premier establishments as the Blackstone Hotel in 1910 and the Drake Hotel in 1920. Drake’s social concern prompted him to donate the drinking fountain to the City to provide office workers an alternative to the fare of nearby saloons.

The public drinking fountain movement began in England in the late 1850s. To promote their crusade against alcohol, Victorians sought to provide citizens with a “wholesome substitute for beer or other drink” and erected hundreds of water fountains throughout London. Drinking fountains were often the only source of clean drinking water available to the urban poor. Often located in public parks, the drinking fountains conveniently provided citizens with a pure refreshment in a pastoral setting as an alternative to a less wholesome beverage in a public house or tavern. In addition to their practical function, the elaborately decorated Victorian drinking fountains served as important public monuments to good health and civic pride.

Public water fountains gained popularity in the eastern cities in the United States, and, according to historian Perry Duis, author of *The Saloon*, as early as 1867 public drinking fountains became an important means of promoting temperance and combating the lure of saloons in Chicago. With very little public funding available, the construction of these public amenities were generally financed by private citizens and anti-liquor groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. These “ice water fountains” in Chicago ranged from simple troughs to grand monuments like the Drake Fountain which featured ten faucets connected to pipes leading from a chamber that held three tons of ice. Each of the fountain’s four water basins was equipped with a bronze hand-held drinking cup.

According to an account in the January 7, 1893 edition of the *Graphic*, a local daily newspaper, the fountain was dispensing water by October 1892; however, it was not dedicated until December 26, 1892, when the statue was completed and set in place. James Riedy, the author of *Chicago Public Sculpture*, noted that when the Drake Fountain was unveiled in Chicago, it was the first public statue of Columbus erected outside of the eastern region of the United States. The monument originally stood on Washington Street in a plaza between the old City Hall-County building that once stood on the site of the present City Hall-Cook County Building. In 1906 it was moved around the corner from its original location to LaSalle St. in order to accommodate the construction of the present Cook County Building. The Drake Fountain stood on LaSalle St. in front of the former City Hall until that building was razed and the construction of the present City Hall half of the building began. In 1909 the monument was moved to its present location in the South Chicago community.

The Drake Fountain depicts Columbus as the “Discoverer of America,” in the traditional characterization and interpretation at the time when many statues were erected throughout

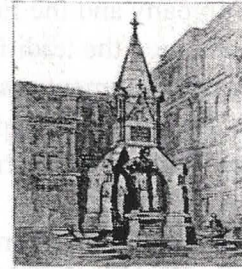
Below: John B. Drake a prominent hotel owner donated the fountain to the City in 1892.

Right: Believed to be Chicago's first monument commemorating Columbus, the Drake Fountain was dedicated in December 1892, to mark the 400th anniversary of his voyage. At the time of the dedication, Chicago was about to host the World's Columbian Exposition.



THE DRAKE FOUNTAIN IN CHICAGO.

The dedication of the Drake Fountain, dedicated at the south side of the City Hall in Chicago will do much to further the sympathy for the fountain. The fountain is the gift of Mr. John B. Drake, of Chicago, and bears upon a tablet of bronze the inscription "The Drake Fountain, the Gift of John B. Drake to the City of Chicago." The fountain is constructed of Italian, red granite, and in design is Gothic. It is 58 feet at the base, of equal height on all sides and has round projecting corners. It is very substantially built, and has an entire height of 80 feet. At the summit of the fountain, which is where the first step, are eight, polished



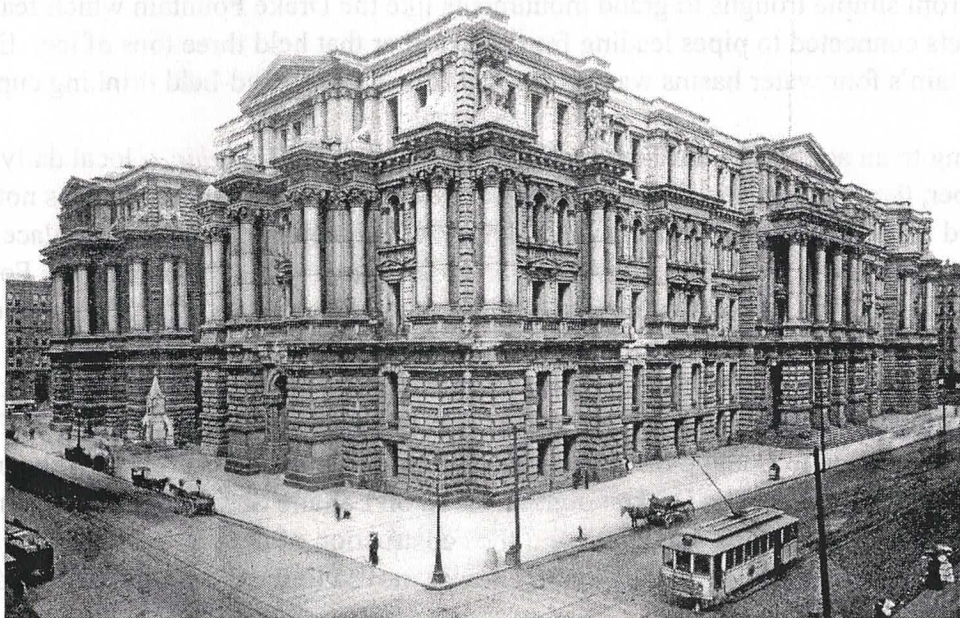
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THE COLUMBUS STATUE ON THE DRAKE FOUNTAIN.

cases, having in the center standards with compressed flowers. There are two of these flowers, in each of which is situated a bronze disk, and from a series of horizontal lines are placed heavy disks upon which stand a completed statue. Above, the statue is



Above: The fountain originally stood on Washington St. in a plaza between the former City Hall-County building (now the site of the present City Hall-Cook County Building). This photo from 1906 shows the northwest corner of Washington Street and Clark Street.



In 1906, the fountain was moved around the corner from its original site to the LaSalle Street sidewalk in front of the former City Hall building. Above: Office workers stop for a cool drink of water from the fountain's four basins (circa 1908). Below: This 1908 photo shows the Drake Fountain and the former City Hall building in the foreground as the present day County Building rises in the background.



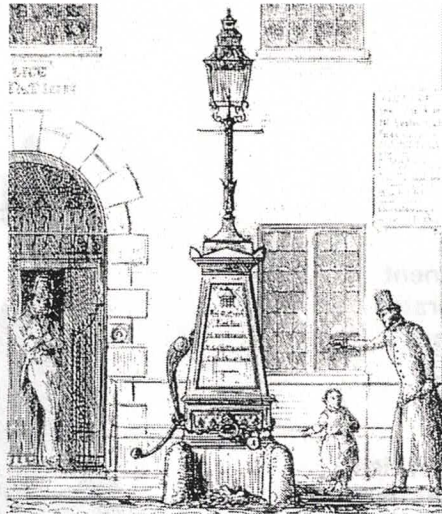
the nation to honor the explorer. At the time of the statue's unveiling, Chicago was about to host the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the world's fair commemorating the 400th anniversary celebration of Columbus's landing in the "New World." In addition to commemorating Columbus's voyage, the Drake Fountain also served to mark the tremendous significance of the World's Fair to Chicago.

FOUNTAIN DESCRIPTION AND THE VICTORIAN GOTHIC STYLE

Situated on a traffic island where three heavily traveled streets (92nd Street, South Chicago Avenue and Exchange Avenue) converge, the Drake Fountain is a distinctive sight in the South Chicago community. The visually prominent monument consists of a richly decorated granite spire-like structure which rises as a background for a life-size bronze sculpture of Christopher Columbus. Created by sculptor Richard Henry Park, the statue depicts a young Columbus who stands pondering over a globe in his left hand and clutching a compass in his right hand. The base of the sculpture bears the mark of the foundry, "Foundry Nelli," that cast the statue. The figure is poised atop a square stone base of Italian granite which is inscribed with the words, "Christopher Columbus, The Discoverer of America, 1492." A small stone block bearing a plaque was added to the base in 1986 when the fountain was rededicated to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the South Chicago community.

In contrast to the pensive figure, the Drake Fountain is itself an exuberant detailed Victorian Gothic structure which rises behind the sculpture. At the center of the granite base is a 33-foot-high Victorian Gothic structure comprised of four flying buttresses supporting an ornately detailed steeple. Each buttress is accented with paired columns topped by a pediment. Panels accentuated with ornate foliate patterns are situated at the mid-level of the steeple where the buttresses adjoin. The upper tier of the steeple features a plaque which reads, "Ice water fountain gift of John B. Drake to the City of Chicago 1892." Two sets of engaged paired-colonettes support a pediment at each corner of the steeple, while each elevation of the steeple features a pinnacle decorated with geometric tracery and topped with a Gothic crocket. The steeple is topped by a spire with a decorative finial. At each of the four corners of the monument's two-tiered base is a large low basin. The basins, which are decorated with an ornamental banding featuring a clover and scroll pattern, originally served as drinking fountains and now function as flower planters.

The monument exemplifies the elaborate, highly detailed **Victorian Gothic** style, an interpretation of the Gothic style found in both England and the United States from about 1860 to 1890. Characterized by its solemn, dignified character, the style was frequently employed in churches, monuments and funerary structures in America in the last half of the nineteenth century. Victorian Gothic employs features of Gothic architecture, a style prevalent during the Middle Ages in Western Europe that was largely used for dramatically-scaled cathedrals. Characterized by flying buttresses, pointed arches, rib



The public drinking fountain movement began in England in the 1850s. Left: A rendering of the St. Anne's Fountain in London.

Below: The Victorian Gothic style Drake Fountain evolved from the English tradition. The distinctive fountain was moved to its present location in the South Chicago neighborhood in 1909.

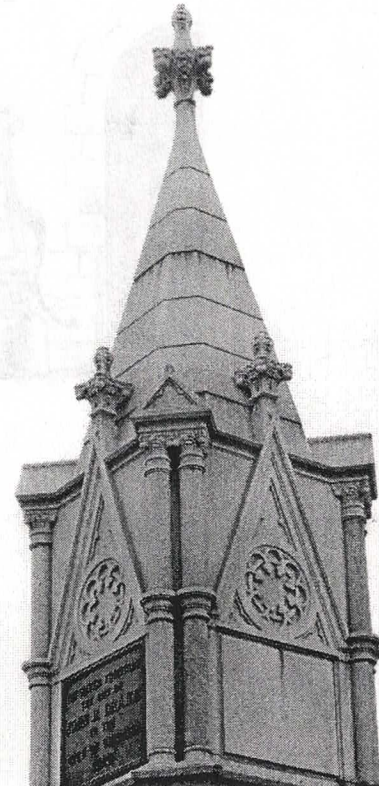


The public drinking fountain movement began in England in the 1850s. Left: A rendering of the St. Anne's Fountain in London.

Below: The Victorian Gothic style. The fountain evolved from the English tradition. The distinctive

Below and right: The visually prominent monument consists of a richly decorated granite spire-like structure which rises behind a life-size bronze sculpture of Christopher Columbus.

Bottom right: The fountain's basins, which originally served as drinking fountains, now serve as flower planters.



vaults, and a system of richly decorated fenestration, Gothic architecture lasted until the 16th century.

A revival of Gothic architecture was largely sparked by John Ruskin who aimed at reviving the spirit and forms of Gothic architecture. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Ruskin suggested that the Gothic style embodied a “truth” that made it the most appropriate style for future development. Ruskin’s philosophy was embraced in by many architects in the United States, including Richard Upjohn, designer of Trinity Church (1839-46), and James Renwick, architect of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral (1858-79), both in New York City. The various interpretations of the Gothic Revival architecture were commonly built well into the 20th century.

In Chicago, several important buildings have been designed in this style including the Scottish Rite Cathedral rebuilt in 1873 by Burling & Adler (located at 929 N. Dearborn Street in the Washington Square Landmark District) and the Fourth Presbyterian Church by Howard Van Doren Shaw (860 N. Michigan Avenue). The application of the Gothic Revival style was also employed for more vernacular buildings such as cottage residences, public works buildings like the Old Chicago Water Tower (1869) and Chicago Avenue Pumping Station (1866) by William W. Boyington (at Chicago and Michigan Avenue, designated Chicago landmarks in 1971), and monuments, such as the Drake Fountain. Interestingly, the religious overtones associated with the style corresponded with the fountain’s moral aim to promote temperance.

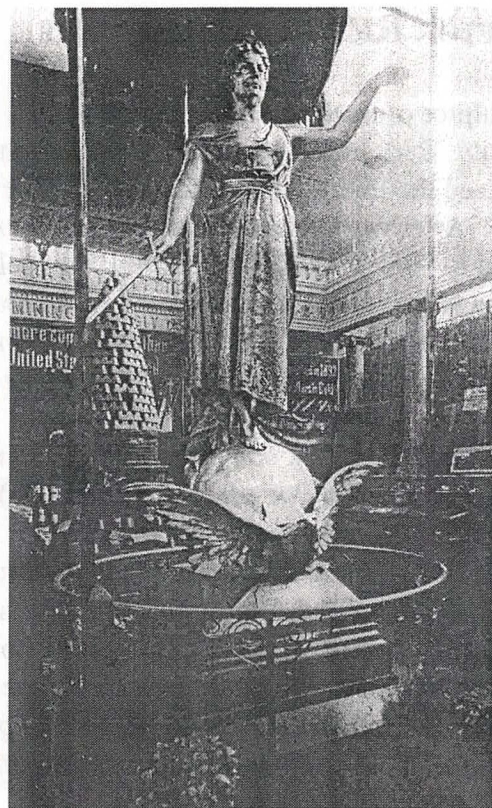
SCULPTOR RICHARD HENRY PARK

The sculptor of the Drake Fountain, **Richard Henry Park (1832-1902)**, was born in New York City. Park began his career as an assistant of Erastus Dow Palmer, who was considered the foremost neoclassical sculptor in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. After working in Palmer’s studio in Albany, New York, from 1855 to 1861, Park returned to New York City to establish himself as an independent sculptor. From his studio in New York, Park completed works including portrait busts and medallions. In 1871 Park relocated to Florence where he continued his study of neoclassical figures and is said to have maintained a studio for twenty years.

During the 1880s, Park completed one of his most ambitious works, his marble and bronze *Edgar Allan Poe Memorial* (1882-84). The massive Memorial, commissioned by a group of New York actors, was unveiled on May 4, 1885, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and in 1993 was placed on permanent loan to the Edgar Allan Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia. The sculptor soon developed a more naturalistic style and favored working in bronze. In 1885 his bronze statue of George Washington, reportedly the first public monument of Washington erected west of Virginia, was dedicated in Milwaukee. Hoping to secure commissions for the World’s Columbian Exposition, Park moved to Chicago in the early 1890s. During this time he created the

Right: Richard Henry Park, sculptor of the Drake Fountain, created this marble and bronze memorial to Edgar Allan Poe in 1885. Park arrived in Chicago in the early 1890s and was commissioned to create a 15-foot-high silver statue, *Justice*, (bottom right) for the state of Montana that was exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition.

Below: After the World's Fair, Park remained in Chicago and created this bronze statue of *Michael Reese* which stands in front of Michael Reese Hospital at 29th and Ellis Avenue.



Drake Fountain and a 15-foot-high solid silver statue, *Justice*, for the state of Montana that was cast in Chicago and exhibited at the fair's Mines and Mining Building.

Richard Henry Park remained in Chicago following the fair and executed a number of works for the city. These commissions include an 1893 bronze statue of *Michael Reese* (located in front of Michael Reese Hospital, 29th St. and Ellis Ave.), an 1896 bronze statue of *Benjamin Franklin* (Stockton Dr. in Lincoln Park), and an undated monument to *Charles J. Hull* (Rosehill Cemetery). Park died in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1902. The Drake Fountain has been recognized for its historic and artistic significance. It was colorcoded "orange" in the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey*. Additionally, the Drake Fountain was featured in James Riedy's *Chicago Sculpture* and Ira Bach's *A Guide to Chicago's Public Sculpture*.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2 120 620 and 630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Drake Fountain be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Drake Fountain is an outstanding and extremely rare-surviving example of Victorian-era "ice water" public drinking fountain.
- The Drake Fountain, comprised of four flying buttresses supporting an ornately detailed spire ornamented with crockets and a finial, is an excellent example of the Victorian Gothic architectural style. It is distinguished by fine craftsmanship and use of materials, with finely-carved Victorian Gothic-style ornament executed in granite.

Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.

- Since the Drake Fountain was moved to its present-day location in 1909, it has been and continues to be a distinctive visual feature in the South Chicago community and serves as a prominent visual landmark at the bustling intersection of three of the neighborhood's most highly traveled arteries—92nd Street, South Chicago and Exchange Avenues.

Integrity Criteria

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

While the water feature of the Drake Fountain is no longer in use, the monument and sculpture have excellent physical integrity and are virtually unaltered from their 1892 appearance.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its preliminary evaluation of the Drake Fountain, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- the monument in its entirety, including the statue, pedestal and base.



Above: A historic photo of the Drake Fountain from 1908. The fountain is seen here on LaSalle Street just prior to its relocation to its present day site in the South Chicago neighborhood.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CITY OF CHICAGO

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Department of Planning and Development

Alicia Mazur Berg, Commissioner

Brian Goeken, Deputy Commissioner for Landmarks

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Heidi Sperry, writing, photography, and layout

Timothy Frye and Margaret Klein, research

Terry Tatum and Brian Goeken, editing

Illustrations

Department of Planning and Development, Landmarks Division: pp. 2 (bottom), 7 (bottom), 8, and 10 (left).

From Gilbert, *Chicago and Its Makers*: p. 4 (left).

From *The Graphic*: p. 4 (right).

From Viskochil, *Chicago at the Turn of the Century in Photographs*: p. 4 (bottom).

Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society: pp. 5 and 13.

From Lambton, *Vanishing Victoriana*: p. 7 (top).

From Tolles, *American Sculpture*: p. 10 (top).

From Applebaum, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893*: p. 10 (bottom).

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-2958) TTY; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, <http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>.

This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the City Council's final landmark designation ordinance should be regarded as final.